

# Manna for Your Soul

## An Old Man's Dream

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

"In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, *and* told the sum of the matters. <sup>2</sup> Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. <sup>3</sup> And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another." **Daniel 7:1-3**

### Looking at the Word:

Much as the opening chapter set the spiritual tone for everything that followed in the first half of Daniel, so chapter seven is foundational for the prophetic fireworks in the second half of this book. As a young man, Daniel was noted for his ability to interpret dreams (1:17) and on at least two separate occasions, he was called to use his interpretive skills on behalf of the king (2:36; 4:19). Still, it was not until Daniel was older that he dreamed dreams of his own. This seventh chapter is the first of four recorded dream-visions God granted Daniel. It reveals a grand panoramic view of human history, starting with the captivity of Israel and ending with the second coming of Christ. John Walvoord writes that Daniel's vision in this chapter "provides the most comprehensive and detailed prophecy of future events to be found anywhere in the Old Testament" (Daniel, page 145).

- **The Dream Setting (Daniel 7:1):** Historians disagree as to when Nabonidus entrusted the throne and army of Babylon to his son, Belshazzar. We do know it occurred between 556 and 550 B.C. (11-17 years before Daniel's lion-den-deliverance). When Belshazzar ascended the throne, Babylonian might and supremacy were taken for granted. God chose the first year of Babylon's last king to unveil man's future to Daniel. While his body rested in sleep, Daniel's dream was repeatedly disrupted by the frightening scenes of animal brutality that flashed through his mind.
- **The Wind-Tossed Sea (Daniel 7:2):** Daniel's dream-vision began with Daniel looking at a wind-generated storm upon the "great sea." This is a term normally used in the Old Testament referring to the Mediterranean (Numbers 34:6-7; Joshua 1:4; 9:1; 15:12, 47; Ezekiel 47:10; 48:28). The sea is also used in prophetic literature as a picture of the ungodly nations surrounding Israel (Isaiah 17:12-13; Jeremiah 6:23; Revelation 13:1; 17:1). Writing nearly 200 years earlier, Isaiah noted, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked (Isaiah 57:20-21)." The world is in constant distress and agitation. While the nations are troubled by sin and its consequences, Daniel also saw the direct action of God troubling the sea with the "four winds of heaven." The winds of God include His judgment on sin, but they also include God's hand pushing upon a nation to rise or fall in accordance with His sovereign will and purpose.
- **The Four Emerging Beasts (Daniel 7:3):** The Aramaic word translated as "strove" in verse 2 (KJV) has a Hebrew equivalent which brings with it the idea of the surging movement of water. It is also used of the "surging, writhing motion of a baby as it comes forth from the mother's womb (Job 38:8; Psalm 22:10) (Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains). In similar fashion the wind tossed sea (wicked gentile nations) gave birth to four dream creatures, each one more fierce and brutal than the one coming before it. In Daniel 2 the gentile nations were represented by a metallic image in human form. The dream's perspective focused on the external glory of the nations. Each nation had some worth or merit. Here in Daniel 7 God gave Daniel an internal perspective of a nation's spiritual and moral character. While each nation was unique, it was still at heart animalistic and brutal in its hunger and drive for power and dominion.

### Application and Meditation:

Daniel was close to 70 years old when he began receiving dream visions from the Lord. God used this older experienced Daniel to deliver an incredible series of dream-pictures detailing man's future within the sovereign plan of God. The life of Daniel teaches that neither youth nor old age is a hindrance for the grace of God to work in a believer's life. If you've been gifted with years of experience, then let God use you for His glory. Your best days of ministry may still be in front of you. © Mike Davidson